

VZCZCXRO9457  
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNN  
DE RUEHVN #0272 1301025  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 091025Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2008  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2300  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0160  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1247

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 000272

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2018

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#) [LA](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE TO LAOS: HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO CYCLONE  
NARGIS

REF: STATE 48651

Classified By: Mary Grace McGeehan, Deputy Chief of Mission. Reason: 1  
.4 b and d.

11. (C) Summary: According to an MFA official who traveled to Rangoon on May 7 with the Lao Vice Foreign Minister, Burmese officials expressed appreciation for Lao material assistance (\$20,000 and three tons of food) and said that they would welcome more, but declined the GOL's offer to send an assistance team. The official said that the Burmese had declined a similar offer from the Chinese. The Burmese, he said, claim to have enough personnel to assist their population. The DCM urged the GOL, as a friend of Burma, to encourage the authorities there to allow relief workers into their country. The official said that the GOL and the Burmese government have not discussed the situation since the delegation visit and that Laos cannot interfere in Burma's internal affairs. However, he said that he hopes the Burmese will accept assistance, especially from the UN, if they find that they cannot assist the population adequately themselves.  
End summary.

12. (U) The DCM delivered Reftel demarche to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Deputy Director General for Asia Pacific and Africa Voroth Soundara May 9. Mr. Voroth had accompanied Vice Foreign Minister Bounkeut Sangsomsack to Rangoon on May 7 to deliver humanitarian assistance. He said that the Lao had provided \$20,000 in financial assistance and three tons of food aid (not 2.5 tons as reported in the Lao press), including noodles, rice, canned fish, and drinking water. They were received by the Burmese Deputy Minister of Social Welfare. Relief planes from many other countries, including Thailand, Japan, China, India, and Bangladesh, were at the Rangoon airport as well. Mr. Voroth said that the GOL will organize fundraising efforts to provide additional assistance.

13. (C) According to Mr. Voroth, VFM Bounkeut offered to send a Lao team, including nurses, doctors, and engineers, to provide assistance in affected areas. The Burmese officials expressed appreciation but said that their government had enough staff to assist victims. However, they said that they would welcome further material assistance. Mr. Voroth said that China had also been interested in sending assistance teams but the Burmese government did not accept their offer either.

14. (SBU) Mr. Voroth said that he hoped that the Burmese government would request assistance from outsiders, particularly the UN, if they are unable to provide sufficient assistance themselves. The DCM said that it would be helpful for Laos, as a friendly country, to make this point to the Burmese. She asked whether the two governments have had further discussions on the situation since VFM Bounkeut's visit. Mr. Voroth said that they have not and commented that Laos cannot interfere in Burma's internal affairs.

15. (SBU) Mr. Voroth said that the Lao delegation had taken a 30-minute trip around Rangoon to assess the storm damage. During the trip through the devastated city, the Burmese officials who accompanied them expressed particular concern about the loss of large trees along Rangoon's boulevards, noting that it would be hot without them.  
HUSO